

SWAMP TUPELO

Nyssa sylvatica var. *biflora* (Walt.) Sarg.

OTHER COMMON NAMES: Blackgum, swamp blackgum.

FORM: A tree, rarely more than 30 feet tall, with a slender trunk gradually tapering upward from a swollen and enlarged base, small spreading branches forming a narrow pyramidal head, branchlets slightly villose when they first appear, soon glabrous, bright reddish brown in their first winter, becoming darker the following year, and numerous erect thick roots rising above the surface of the water.

BARK: About 1 inch thick, deeply furrowed, gray to very dark reddish brown,

TWIGS: Moderately stout, reddish brown, lateral buds smaller than terminal; 3 bundle scars; pith, white.

LEAVES: Oblanceolate, oblong, elliptic **or** rarely ovate, acute or acuminate or occasionally rounded at the narrow apex, cuneate or rounded at the gradually narrowed base, and entire, when they unfold silky-villose above and hoary-tomentose beneath, soon becoming glabrous, dark yellow-green and lustrous on the upper surface, paler and sometimes glaucous on the lower surface, 2"-4" long and 3/4"-1" wide, with a prominent midrib and numerous slender veins; petioles stout, 1/4"-1/2" in length.

FLOWERS: Appearing when the leaves are nearly fully grown; staminate or slender villose pedicels, in many-flowered loose clusters on slender hairy peduncles 1"-1-1/2" in length, pistillate in pairs rather stouter peduncles usually about 1" long; calyx of the staminate flower depressed and circular; petals oblong-ovate, rounded at apex, white erect or slightly spreading, early deciduous.

FRUIT: Solitary or in pairs, on peduncles 1"-1 1/2" in length, oval or ellipsoid, dark blue, lustrous, about 1/3" long, with acrid pulp; stone oval and prominently ribbed.

WINTER BUDS: Acute, dark red-brown, puberulous, and about 1/8 inch long, the inner scales hoary-tomentose.

WOOD: Moderately heavy and hard, difficult to split, shrinks considerably, tends to warp and twist, without characteristic odor or taste.

USES: Pulp, lumber. Historical uses: Veneer, plywood, barrel staves, railroad ties, furniture.

HABITAT: Seed disseminated by birds, best development along streams where periodic flooding occurs.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS: Fruit pits are featured by prominent, longitudinal ridges or ribs.

DISTRIBUTION IN ALABAMA: On the wetter sites of South and Central Alabama, often in association with black tupelo.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE

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| 1. A flowering branch of the sterile tree. | 4. Vertical section of fertile flower. |
| 2. A flowering branch of the fertile tree. | 5. A fruiting branch, natural size. |
| 3. Vertical section of a sterile flower. | 6. A fruit cut crosswise, enlarged. |
| | 7. A stone, enlarged. |



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